

SE 14'71

Preparing the Council of Young People



Letter from Taizé

The Joyful News announced at Easter 1970 :

The Risen Christ comes to quicken a festival in the innermost heart of man. He is preparing a spring time of the Church : a Church devoid of means of power, ready to share with all, a place of visible communion for all humanity. He is going to give us enough imagination and courage to open up a path of reconciliation. He is going to prepare us to give our life so that man be no longer victim of man.

The announcement on Easter Day of a Council of Young People has committed us first and foremost to living a festival deep within ourselves.

The Council will open later : it is the second stage. For the moment, we have already begun the stage of counciliar preparation. This preparation will be like a long march through a desert. We set off without knowing where we are going, expecting the fulfilment of a promise and refusing to settle down.

Yet in the barrenness of the desert there is the freshness of oases. In these meeting places we search together in the depths to discover the living water, the festival within us, the spring bursting forth to fill us. It is this festival in our innermost heart that we are called to live so as to get underway.

The Council will consist in pooling what we have lived. The preparation for the Council consists first of all in living, and that means great demands made upon us. To find the living water we ever rebegin by immersing ourselves in the hidden, underground movement of the Church. Let us remember : the Church is at one and the same time an underground river which, in secret, hidden movement, assures à continuity that flows from the very first Pentecost, and a « city set on a hill to be seen by all men ».

There are many who have accomplished such a long march before us. This was the case, for example, of the exodus of the people of God toward the promised land.

In our common march towards a promise, towards a Church of sharing, there will be some who regret having committed themselves. They will be constantly looking back to what they have left behind them, to « all that we ate in Egypt, but now there is nothing at all » as the Biblical text says, and they will become bogged down in their own reaction.

In the desert there are also those who want to slake their thirst and so go off after mirages. They leave the long march in order to go searching around them. They run here and there looking for ideas and abstract constructions. What is to be done when so many systems are being constructed, when ideas succeed one another like wave upon wave ? We should know that there are mental mechanisms in man that keep him in a state of illusion. Running around on all sides gives the impression of moving but only holds up the long march for those with whom we have committed ourselves.

We are beginning by searching in the depths, but be sure that the living water will emerge. When the spring is strong, nothing can stop it, the day comes when it bursts from the earth.

frère Roger, Prior of Taizé

HOW ARE WE TO LIVE THE PREPARATION OF THE COUNCIL OF YOUNG PEOPLE ?

We shall live it in a threefold celebration of the Risen Christ, a springing source by which living forces are set in motion :

We celebrate the Risen Christ in the Eucharist. By it we are given to share the life of the Risen Christ and participate in the paschal mystery : to share in the trials of Christ who, until the end of time, suffers in his body, the Church, and in men, our brothers : to live at the deepest level within ourselves the festival always offered by the Risen Christ, he who alone transfigures the depths of man. The Eucharist is there for us who are weak and defenseless. We receive it in a spirit of poverty and repentance of heart. In our journey through the desert, towards a Church of sharing, the Eucharist gives us courage not to store up the manna, to give up material reserves and to share not only the bread of life but also the goods of the earth.

We celebrate the Risen Christ by our love for the Church, a love which kindles a fire on earth. If the Church is in one way like an underground river which, in a secret, hidden movement, assures a continuity that flows from the very first Pentecost, it is also a « city set on a hill to be seen by all men ». By the visibility of our brotherly love, by our rediscovered unity, the Church is called to become an unparalleled ferment of fraternity, of communion, of sharing for all humanity : that is the essence of its ecumenical vocation. On the eve of his death Christ prayed that our unity would make it possible for men to believe.

We celebrate the Risen Christ in man, our brother. Living by poor values — prayer, confidence in one another, we discover that « man is sacred by the wounded innocence of his childhood, by the mystery of his poverty ». In man we see the very face of Christ « above all when tears and suffering have made this face more transparent ». So we will give even our life that man be no longer victim of man.

Beginning the Preparation of the Council of Young People

A regular time of prayer and dialogue in Taizé (once or twice a year) is essential for sustaining the long march.

There are some who will want to join with others living in the same place, with a view to pursuing their search together. They should meet in small groups. Those who took part in the Easter Meeting can try especially to meet with young people who were not present so as to share the Joyful News with them.

To begin with, what we shall try to examine thoroughly and to live is the first key-idea of the Joyful News : The Risen Christ comes to quicken a festival in the innermost heart of man.



In order that everyone may go forward together, you will regularly receive a « Letter from Taizé ». You are asked to reply and we shall pass on your replies, as far as is possible, in the following letter. Thus a communion will be established and your intuitions will help the reflexion of everyone else. The contribution asked for this Letter is 7 Fr. a year, to be paid by international money order and addressed to 71 - Taizé - Communauté, France, mentioning « Letter from Taizé ». Those unable to afford this sum may give less and the balance will be met by those who can give more. This fund will also help to resolve the difficult question of the necessary travelling costs of young people, from the third world in particular.



For the present, there is so much that has to be done to bring young people of every continent and people and race into the long march. It is essential to go to every country in the world. We do not want to arrive at the fulfilment of a promise, a springtime of the Church, without having given the possibility of creating it to the greatest number of people.

The first big meetings will take place in Asia, Africa and South America so that young people of the Southern Hemisphere may participate in the preparation of the Council.

Two listening-posts per continent are in process of being set up so that we may be attentive to all that comes from the southern continents : in Africa, at Dakar (Senegal) and Kigali (Rwanda), in South America at Bogota (Colombia) and Recife (Brazil), in Asia, Bombay (India) and another place still to be decided.

The tasks in these places will be to listen, to gather in, to try to understand and pass on what has been grasped. No listening-post is to be set up in Europe or North America because first and foremost we want to listen to the very poor. First, the Southern Hemisphere ; for so long we have made it an economic and even a spiritual by-product of the northern hemisphere.

With young people from every continent, our long march will lead us far. Yet nothing of importance will be achieved without a minimum of time. In order to go forward, man can only put one foot before the other. If he tries to go more quickly by jumping with his feet joined together, he just gets out of breath. Thus our march will also be one of small daily fidelities which one day will make us available for a great fidelity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, shortly before his execution in a concentration camp, foresaw in the West a passion for what is instantaneous, an abandoning of fidelity, of the « moral memory » as he said. Here is what he wrote :

« What has happened to this kind of memory today ? Does it not explain why we sit so lightly to the ties of love and marriage, of friendship and loyalty ? Nothing holds us, nothing is firm. Everything is here today and gone tomorrow. Goodness, beauty and truth, however, and all great accomplishments need time, permanence and memory, or else they deteriorate. »

At Taizé

Since it is in Taizé that the long march as a whole is recapitulated, young people can come each week,

Monday to Monday, or a shorter time, as they are able. They are asked to give word beforehand. The time in Taizé is seen primarily in terms of prayer and common life in groups. Those who are reluctant about group dialogue may, however, follow a more individual rhythm.

It is hoped that small hermitages will be built by young people for those who wish a more demanding retreat.

We shall also have meetings for older people, married couples and children so that everyone be associated in the preparation of the Council and that there be no segregation between the generations.

The theme in Taizé will be that proposed for everyone : How to live the festival of the Risen Christ in the innermost heart of man ?



For young people, weekly sessions will be more especially organized for the following dates : July 13 - July 20 / July 20 - July 27 / July 27 - August 3 / August 3 - August 10 / August 10 - August 17 / August 17 - August 24 / August 24 - August 31 / August 31 - September 7 / September 7 - September 14.

Participants : Young people from 17 to 29 (young couples included), individually or in groups. To insure balance among the participants, groups are requested to make up their number half of men, half of women.

Lodging : Individual or collective tents ; a few places available in dormitories.

Participation in Costs : Left to the responsibility of each individual (suggested rate is 8 Fr. per day).

Teams for Receiving and Leading Groups : Those who wish to undertake either of these tasks for one or several weeks should write to us. They will arrive at Taizé two days before the others, that is to say, on Friday.

Individual Retreats : opportunity is offered to everyone, men and women, either in Taizé, neighbouring villages or the women's communities in the region.

Registration : Register beforehand by means of the enclosed form. Those coming in groups are asked as far as possible to register individually, one registration form per person.